

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Timothy M. Kaine
Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 10, 2008

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GOVERNOR KAINE PRAISES COUNCIL ON REFORM FOR IMPROVING PERMANENCY RATES

- Results from CORE hold promise for statewide solutions -

RICHMOND –Governor Timothy M. Kaine and First Lady Anne Holton today praised the positive results of the work by the Council on Reform (CORE) to improve the rate of permanent placement for foster children in Virginia. It has been one year since Governor Kaine began an intensive effort to improve the delivery of child welfare and mental health services to the youth and families of Virginia. Part of this effort was a challenge to both public and private agencies to build on the momentum of First Lady Anne Holton’s [For Keeps](#) initiative, and work together to find more permanent, family connections for children in foster care.

“Data indicate what we know instinctively – kids are better off in the care of a loving family,” Governor Kaine said. “The Commonwealth is working to increase the number and rate at which children in foster care move into permanent family arrangements. It’s a big job, which is why it’s critical for public and private agencies at the state and local level to work together.”

The first phase of this work began with 13 geographically-diverse localities, which became known as the CORE. Since October of 2007, CORE agencies have reduced placements in group care by 133 children or 16 percent, decreased the total number of youth in foster care by four percent, and increased their discharges to permanent homes by nine percent.

Over the past year, the [CORE localities](#) have implemented a variety of strategies and national best practices that have proven effective in connecting children, particularly older youth, with permanent families. Strategies include improving ways to recruit and train foster and adoptive families, empowering youth and families to have more of a voice in critical decisions and committing to continuous quality improvement through effective data management. The innovative strategies and partnerships developed through CORE will be adapted and implemented statewide in Virginia’s larger [Children’s Services System Transformation](#).

As the Children’s Services System Transformation moves forward, First Lady Holton continues her outreach to key stakeholders including Community Policy and Management Teams (CPMTs) and Juvenile and Domestic Relations court judges throughout the state.

“As a former Richmond judge I saw many young people without a connection to the permanent family they deserved. We need to take a fresh look at solutions for keeping kids safe and in the care of a family,” First Lady Holton said. “Maybe this means searching a little harder to find a relative who’s willing to help, or utilizing more community-based services so kids can stay connected to families. Every agency that serves children has the opportunity to make a huge difference in the future of kids in foster care.”

Ray Ratke, special advisor on children’s services for the Commonwealth, has also led CORE to establish a statewide philosophy that will guide a shift in service delivery, encourage effective collaboration across child-serving agencies, and achieve practice consistency.

“Every community in Virginia has its own unique strengths and challenges, too,” Ratke said. “Ultimately, we must be guided by the same child-centered, and family-focused philosophy and [practice model](#), no matter the geographical boundary.”

Contributing to the overall success of CORE and the Virginia Children’s Services Transformation is the support and technical assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as best-practices learned from other states involved in similar reform efforts.

“We’re listening, we’re learning and the data tells us that we’re on the right track,” said Ratke. “Most of all, we’re eager to bring new strategies, training and other supports to the rest of the Commonwealth.”

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